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ABSTRACT

Certain major thinkers regard both change and anger as inevitable aspects of human living. A system called Re-Creative Psychology (originally conceived by Paul Frisch) addresses one way to frame anger in order to create constructive change. It is an organized system of behavior management which deals with three broad categories: self-actualization, social relationships, and spiritual well-being. Each category has a paired dimension which is the actual tool for managing anger and change effectively. In the self-actualization category, the paired dimension that leads to change is between social roles and feelings. For social relationships the paired dimension is between power and intimacy. The paired dimension for spiritual well-being is between responsibility and freedom. Anger can be a useful force to change a bad situation, but it needs a great deal of guidance to make sure it is carefully directed to reach the desired goal. (LLL)

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ANGER AND THE CHANGE PROCESS

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ANGER AND THE CHANGE PROCESS

Today I am going to present a system for categorizing personal information which can be used to frame anger so that anger becomes a fuel for constructive change. When I began to think about this paper, I decided to poll people on how they regard anger and the way it relates to change.

A strong theme emerged. Invariably the response was that intense anger stops constructive change. Moreover, at times it can lead to destructive change. As anger rises, fear of taking risks lower and this increases the chance of poor judgment being used in the change about to be made. On the other hand, there are risk adversive people who resent change. This causes them anger. For these individuals, resistance to change can have destructive consequences. In this case, anger can work for the individual by reducing his fear of risk taking and fueling his motivation for needed, positive change.

In the first part of this presentation, I will make some brief comments about anger. In the second part, I will discuss some of the literature on the subject of change. Finally, in the third part, I will offer a solution for framing anger into constructive change. This solution involves a description of a point of view that is the basis for my clinical, and educational work.

But I am getting ahead of myself. Back to anger.

From my overview of the subject, it appears that there are two schools of thought on the concept of anger ventilation. The research conducted by Williams, Barefoot, and Shekelle at Duke University, entitled "The Health Consequences of Anger," suggests that there is a positive correlation between coronary atherosclerosis, cancer, and other diseases and a personality syndrome which they call cynicism. Cynicism has the concomitant attitude set associated with it called hostility, or "I don't trust others." The belief system in this attitude set is generally that people tend to be rotten until shown to be otherwise. The most prevalent accompanying emotion to the cynicism peronality syndrome is anger and aggression. It would therefore follow that if this cynical group could ventilate their anger and aggression-- they could get it out of their system and possibly reduce the chances of becoming physically ill.

In Patterson's extensive study, "A Microsocial Analysis of Anger and Irritable Behavior," he found that the environment had as much of a determinating effect on a mother's anger towards her child as her feelings toward the child. Patterson posed the possibility that in future research, if the mother's perception of the environment could be modified, anger and irritable behavior between them might also change. Here he suggests that if one can change the way a mother thinks, it may change the way she feels and this could reduce anger between mother and child.

My further reading on the subject of anger lead me to the work of our fellow panelist, Carol Tavris. She suggests that the ventilation of anger can actually stimulate more intense angry feelings. Now for the E.S.P. part-- the day that I completed reading Dr. Tavris's book, my husband and I were eating at a Chinese restaurant. As a great believer in psychic forces, I always eagerly look forward to the fortune cookies at the end of the meal. This time I'll quote the fortune verbatim: "It is often better not to see an insult than to avenge it." Well, that sealed Tavris's theory for me. Even the Chinese psychic forces agreed that ventilation of anger can often be the less preferred behavior choice.

People need to get angry, no doubt, since anger originates in the neocortex, the center for symbolic thought, logic, and reason. Its basic part of us is not to be denied. But social experiences affect our basic physiology. Without arousal, anger may recede into a milder emotion. Therefore, if the goal is constructive change, a decision has to be made as to whether to fan the anger (for risk adversives) or to cool the anger (for emotional hot heads).

The theory that I will advocate at the conclusion of this presentation will be one that requires thinking. Thinking affects people's moods and causes them to feel a certain way. Depending on the goal, one can influence thoughts in certain pathways for constructive change. Keeping in mind the presenting thesis of this paper-- that ventilation of intense anger may also lead to destructive change (in the form of heart disease, mother-child conflict, and so forth), I

will now proceed to the second part of my presentation which will discuss change.

One of the earliest proponents of the inevitability of change was the ancient Greek philosopher, Heraclitis. In 500 B.C., he stated that the world's stability rested on the balance between opposites; and that change is constant. He said that: "One cannot step into the same river twice." But the total balance of the river insures its permanence. His point was that constant flux is a form of living balance.

In Henri Bergson's book, "Creative Evolution," written in the early part of the twentieth century, he speaks about the elan vital, or the spontaneous creative force in humans that continually propells us. It causes us to evolve over the course of our lives into more and more complex forms. The elan vital always seeks to transcend the stage it has attained by risking temporary inadequacy or imbalance. Bergson felt that creative evolution or change was a cosmic process that involved man as well as the entire universe.

Otto Rank, in his works entitled "Beyond Psychology: The Trauma of Birth" and "Will Therapy and Truth and Reality," sees healthy human living as a process of change along the dimensions of unions and separations. He states that: (1) discovery of self-worth comes about through unions, and (2) discovery of [illegible] comes about through separations. Willing this process of change brings an individual through a series of developmental phases.

Sigmund Freud alluded to problems related to non-change caused by humans who can only find balance in their world by choosing one or the other inflexible pathway. Unhappy people find balance by either developing rigid defenses as a compromise resolution between primitive impulses and a punishing conscience or else they develop a very severe conscience which holds them in tight bondage through its demands for perfection. Psychoanalysis works to expand the individual's reason, judgment, and reality orentation to achieve more flexibility and availability to change in the pursuit of psychological balance.

Carl Jung, in his "Collected Works," defines change as the willingness to integrate the opposite, unacceptable, shadow parts of one's personality during the inevitable mid-life crisis for ultimate fulfillment.

In Carl Rodgers's book, "On Becoming A Person," he speaks about life at its best as a constantly changing process. He feels that only in a social environment of "unconditional positive regard" is a "real"-- changing-- relationship possible. Trying to change someone else, as opposed to unconditionally, positively regarding them, only creates rigidity.

As you can see from this very brief review of the literature, certain major thinkers regard both change and anger as inevitable aspects of human living. Since they will invariably be thrown together over a lifetime, the point of this paper seems to be of major significance; how can one use anger in a constructive

fashion when in the process of change?

The answer to this question brings us to the final section of this paper, which concerns one way to frame anger in order to create constructive change. This system called Re-Creative Psychology was originally concieved by Dr. Paul Frisch. My present interpretation of Re-Creative Psychology is what you will now hear. It is that since change is inevitable, how can one be in control of this process over the journeys of a lifetime? The simplest way to approach the problem of the change process is to use a sports analogy. What is the weak spot in an individual's personality that he must concentrate on strengthening in order to play the change process game as well as he can? Realize that the weak spot shifts as the individual improves his game. The weak spot also differs as the game is altered (as new life events develop).

In order to illustrate this theory I will use three case histories. The first one will be yours truly, the second a Wall Street businessman. The third will be my patients Elyse and David-- not their real names.

These illustrations will show how anger can facilitate constructive change when controlled through a disciplined approach, or lead to destructive change when merely ventilated without having conscious control of the change process game.

First I will introduce you to Re-Creative Psychology: an organized system

of behavior management which deals with three broad categories: (1) self-actualization, (2) social relationships, (3) spiritual well-being.

Each category has a paired dimension which is the actual tool for managing anger and change effectively.

In the self-actualization category, the paired dimension that leads to change is on the pathway between social roles and feelings. Concrete social roles are, for example: mother, father, daughter, nurse, psychologist, tennis player, hotel guest, and so forth. Feelings are: happy, sad, joy, fear, anxiety, seuality, good-looking, anger, and so forth.

To the extent that we can integrate the truth of what we are feeling into the roles in which we are feeling them, we are striving for self actualized balance. For example: case history one. I am in the role of panel speaker. I am feeling many emotions. To the extent that I can integrate all of these feelings into my role as speaker, this talk will "come alive."

If I feel angry while speaking (because the audience is noisy, for example) and I try to ignore my feeling, I may become stiff and rigid as I hide behind the role, or conversly, if I ventilate my feeling, I may become hysterical and emotional as I overthrow the role. Either way, I will be out of balance; certainly not self actualized in my role as panel speaker. Therefore I must direct my anger (if I feel any) in a controlled manner. If I am angry because

the audience is noisy, I could direct the anger to humor in order to attempt to laugh at the situation.

I could say to the audience: "From the way you are talking, it reminds me of an unpopular speech that my friend, a physician, gave last week at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City. By the end of his presentation, I was the only person left in the auditorium. When he came down to thank me for staying-- I replied-- "Don't thank me-- I'm the next speaker."

This joke may produce a constructive change in my attitude as I will no longer be uptight-- humor may help me to proceed feeling more relaxed and comfortable in my role. A secondary gain may be that the audience would stop talking. But I must never depend on controlling another person's behavior in order to achieve my happiness or self actualization. This last comment is a universal principle of the change process.

The second category in Re-Creative Psychology is social relationships.

Here the paired dimension that leads to change is in the pathway between power and intimacy. Power is people influence. Intimacy is exposure of shame to a trusted partner. Power between people must be balanced for intimacy to occur. Power also branches out into two parts. Indirect manipulation (strategic power) and direct statements of identity (this is called personal power, or charisma).

An example of power out of balance was discovered in our workshops with Wall Street businessmen (case history number two). To look at these men, one would assume that they all have the power. This can also make people feel jealous and angry. But it is a false assumption. Some six-figure wage earners suffered terribly disruptive symptoms like ulcers, alchoholism, and family problems which may come about as a result of ineffective expression of feelings of anger. Often these men "lead with their chins," so to speak. They are highly verbal, very gregarious, and attractive individuals whom other people like to follow. But secretaries, customers, and relatives can easily cause the businessman stress and anger by indirectly manipulating them through strategies.

An example of strategic manipulation of a Wall Street executive is as follows:

Marilyn the secretary tells her boss Stanley the stockbroker:

"You look tired this morning. . . let me get you some coffee. How's your mother doing? Anything new with little league? Did Max make the team? I bet Valerie would love some flowers. . . you know today is your wedding anniversary?"

"Oh, by the way, Stanley, I have to leave at 12:30 today to see my chiropodist. You know how my feet are killing me."

Guess how Stanley is going to feel by 3:00 in the afternoon as the work piles up on Marilyn's desk?

This is an example of how Marilyn's anger gets strategically and indirectly expressed. by 3:00 Stanley feels duped, dumped, and furious towards Marilyn and the destructive anger rolls on.

A balanced use of power helps to preserve a healthy working relationship. In order to reduce anger in those around you as well as in yourself, one must have access to strategic manipulation. Be willing to manipulate when the occasion arises but realize that an overuse of strategies can lead to mistrust and therefore defeat your whole purpose. Awareness and flexibility in the use of power reduces disruptive anger in the workplace as well as at home.

In the case of Marilyn and Stanley-- if he could change his approach to anger and learn not to either blow up or hold in his anger, and instead, control it through strategic power, he could reply:

"You know how I would love to let you go early Marilyn, but today I have work for you that our entire office is depending on. When you leave at 5:30, we begin our most important sales staff conference of the entire year. no one can get this work out as accurately and quickly as you can."

In this case Marilyn's acting out is stopped-- appreciation is shown for her work-- and the business office hums efficiently all afternoon.

An example of misunderstood use of strategic power which causes anger follows in the story of Elyse and David-- case history three. Love affairs survive if lovers can alert their sweethearts to the times when, with or without the user's awareness, the other person feels angry because of destructive power. He then must speak to his beloved in order to re-establish trust. An example is when Elyse asked David if she could move into his house for a few days because her new apartment wasn't ready. He said no. She felt crushed. Their love affair was in jeopardy.

They both felt angry at each other. She thought he was selfish. He thought she was insensitive and manipulative.

After several days of no talking, they finally spoke. She found out that he feared that once she moved in, she'd never leave and he was not ready to make a permanent commitment. He was ashamed that secretly he's afraid that he is selfish and therefore whenever he says no, it's awkward and abrupt. He found out she couldn't afford to pay the final month's rent because she over-spent on her move. She was ashamed over her inadequate budgeting and temporary poverty. Now that they listened to each other and also risked speaking about sides of themselves in which they feel shame, the anger is gone, power is balanced, and intimacy is resumed.

The third Re-Creative Psychology category is spiritual well-being. Here, the paried dimensions for change is in the pathway between responsibility and freedom. Responsibility has two aspects-- social (for example, paying taxes, buying birthday presents) and personal (looking at the part you play in an interpersonal problem rather than blaming the other person).

Freedom is the readiness to live in the here and now.

Here, David suffers from imbalance problems. He wanted his freedom and obtained a divorce. He then discovered that the responsibility to live a full, satisfying, loving, and creative life weighs much more heavily upon his shoulders now that he no longer has his wife to blame for his frustrations. His anger towards his wife-- which he used (hopefully to make a constructive change), propelled him out of the marriage. This anger has now been replaced with anxiety and fear over the present and the future and homesickness for his former life. At times, David's anger resumes and he destructively ventilates it with little control towards Elyse. Elyse must use constructive power to stop it. David must also take control of his anger so that it doesn't destroy his present relationship. As time goes on, David will begin to discover a balance between freedom and responsibility so that the spiritual well-being which he deeply desires will be achieved. He will be able to rid himself of destructive anger as he is better able to adapt to change.

The Personal Orientation Test is available to those in the audience who may wish to diagnose either themselves or their patients in Re-Creative Psychology terms.

Which is the least developed area?

Which paired dimension is out of balance?

Diagnose the area that most needs to change.

This test has been in the developing stage for the past three years. At least 600 subjects have taken this test in various stages of its life. The reliability results seem to support the eight subscales that have emerged. Almost all of the reliabilities have an alpha coefficient above .70 which is quite good especially in view of the shortness of the scales. We have honed each scale down to only five items. The validity measures are still in the process of refinement. This test is part of my book to be published shortly, the working title is "The Change Process."

In conclusion, anger can be a useful force to change a bad situation, but it needs a great deal of guidance to make sure the angry force is carefully directed to reach the desired goal.

Re-Creative Psychology allows mastery of anger by offering a pathway for

change. It supplies the possibility for making changes in a controlled manner. This useful tool may effect the reduction of anger because it offers hope to end a frustrating situation.

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